

# Forgiveness Full and Free



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**Thrust Statement:** Forgiveness is in and through Jesus Christ our Savior.

**Scripture Reading:** Acts 10:34-43. [\[1\]](#)

I am wondering if you are saying to yourself, “Well, I am not so bad. You know I do a lot of good works. Surely God would not condemn me. I try to treat everybody right.” It is not uncommon for people to reflect upon the good works of individuals at death, and then surmise that surely they are in heaven because they were just “good people.” Christ never really enters the picture. Sin never really enters the picture. There is no concept of the need of redemption from sin. No one discounts good works, but good works alone will not save anyone. Why, because we have all sinned and fallen short of God’s glory. No one is without sin. Everyone must be washed in the blood of the Lamb of God. Without Jesus, one cannot be saved. To set the stage for this message about “Forgiveness Full and Free,” it will be helpful to begin with an individual who was devout, one that feared God, and one that prayed to God always. This man was a good man, but he did not know Christ. But because of his devotion to God, God intervened in his life in order to bring him to a saving knowledge of Jesus, the Savior of the world. God is interested in your salvation and mine.

## CORNELIUS THE CENTURION

Luke records how God through an angel approached Cornelius and told him to send for Peter, one of God’s chosen apostles, to tell him about Jesus, God’s Anointed One. Luke begins this story with these words:

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, “Cornelius!”

Cornelius stared at him in fear. “What is it, Lord?” he asked. The angel answered, “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea.” When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa ([Acts 10:1-8](#)).

God used Cornelius, a gentile, to illustrate that His grace is available to all men, not just Jews. But before the men from Cornelius arrived, God appeared in a vision to Peter to teach him not to call “anything impure that God has made clean” ([Acts 10:15](#)). After Peter reached his destination at Cornelius’s home, Peter went inside and found a large gathering. Peter then informed Cornelius that “You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?” ([Acts 10:28-29](#)). Cornelius then told him about the vision he had encountered and proceeded to say, “So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us” ([Acts 10:33](#)).

### **PETER’S SERMON**

Peter begins his remarks by saying, “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all” ([Acts 10:34-36](#)). This message is as true today as it was almost two thousand years ago. This is the same message that I am proclaiming to all of you. The message of “peace through Jesus Christ” our Lord. In the course of this sermon, Peter says, “All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” ([Acts 10:43](#)). Even with all Cornelius’ good works, still he did not have peace with God that involved the calm of sins forgiven. This peace and forgiveness of sins can be experienced only through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is in this same vein that Paul later wrote after his conversion concerning the forgiveness of sins: “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” ([Romans 5:1](#)).

### **The Promise of Forgiveness**

Peters says, “All the prophets testify about him.” He is referring to the Old Testament Scriptures, which promises forgiveness through the coming of the Messiah. These Scriptures were divided into three parts: the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets. Luke also reports the farewell words of Jesus to His apostles as He draws attention to the three divisions in the Old Testament: “**This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms**” ([Luke 24:44](#)). A study of the Old Testament reveals that forgiveness was not an afterthought on the part of God, but rather, forgiveness was ever and always the promise of God for men and women.

### **Forgiveness Was Promised in the Book of the Law**

As one peruses the Old Testament sacrificial system and the temple complex with

its furniture, one soon discovers that the animal victims and the temple system were but a foreshadowing of the one and only sacrifice that was to be offered in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Hebrew writer expresses it this way:

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (**Hebrews 10:1-4**).

To briefly illustrate the promise of forgiveness in the book of the Law, I call attention to a few passages in the book of **Genesis**. Perhaps, one of the most frequently cited Scriptures in **Genesis** is **chapter 3, verse 15**. This verse records a conversation that God had with Satan: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (**Genesis 3:15**). In other words, God says that this “enmity” will spread to the serpent’s seed and the woman’s seed. God specifically speaks of “one” of Eve’s seed—“he will crush your head.” In other words, God announces this One as a male descendant. “He” will someday bruise the head of the Serpent (Satan), and Satan will bruise his heel. This took place in the crucifixion of Jesus.

In this ultimate atonement for sin in **Genesis 3:15**, God promises a male descendant of the woman who will “crush” and defeat Satan and his seed. This is the Gospel message. Jesus came to give His life a ransom for many and to destroy the works of Satan. Consider the following comments by Jesus: “**the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many**” (**Matthew 10:28**). Again, “**But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself**” (**John 12:31**). Listen, once more, to the words of Jesus as He addresses the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of His disciples and the condemnation of Satan: “**and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned**” (**John 16:11**). **Genesis 3:15** is about forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ.

Before leaving the book of Genesis, it is appropriate that I call attention to God’s conversation with Abraham:

I will make you into a great nation  
and I will bless you;  
I will make your name great,  
and you will be a blessing.  
I will bless those who bless you,  
and whoever curses you I will curse;  
and all peoples on earth  
will be blessed through you (**Genesis 12:2-3**).

God commands Abram to leave his own country and travel to the land that God would show him. In **Genesis 12:3**, God says that He blessed all people through Abram. Again, God repeats his blessings to Abraham as recorded in **Genesis 17**. God, on this occasion, informs Abram that through his seed nations and kings would come forth:

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.”

Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you ([Genesis 17:1-6](#)).

But in [Genesis 22:18](#), God is even more specific, when He informs Abraham that “through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.” The KJV translates this verse: “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”<sup>[2]</sup> Paul, in writing to the Galatians, understood these passages in Genesis as having their fulfillment in Jesus. He writes:

Consider Abraham: “He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you” ([Galatians 3:6-8](#)).

Paul does not stop with this announcement about the proclamation of the gospel to Abraham, but Paul develops this still further by saying: “The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say ‘and to seeds,’ meaning many people, but ‘and to your seed,’ meaning one person, who is Christ” ([Galatians 3:15-16](#)).

### Forgiveness Through His Name

Forgiveness was promised in the Law, the Psalms, and the prophets. This message will not examine the Psalms or the prophets concerning the forgiveness of sins. This development of forgiveness in the Psalms and the prophets will be developed in another message in which I will explore all three divisions. But, for the time being, I want to call attention once more to the sermon of Peter in Cornelius’ home. Peter goes right to the “heart and how” of forgiveness: “All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” ([Acts 10:43](#)).

You must believe in Him if you expect the forgiveness of your sins. “Through His name” comprehends the total life and ministry of our Lord Jesus. One cannot help but recall the angel’s message as he announces the birth of Jesus: “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” ([Matthew 1:21](#)). Up until that time, God’s people depended upon animal sacrifices. But, the writer of the Hebrew letters says, “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” ([Hebrews 10:4](#)). The blood of bulls and goats temporarily covered sins but could not take them away. Finally, however, the Messiah appeared to accomplish this feat. John the Baptist declared, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” ([John 1:29](#)).

### Forgiveness Through His Blood

The Hebrew writer also calls attention to this aspect of forgiveness through blood: “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” ([Hebrews 9:22](#)). God had to deal with man’s evil. God had to present a perfect sacrifice for sin. Since God is holy and just, He had to deal with sin. It is in this regard that Habakkuk speaks, “Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong” ([Habakkuk 1:13](#)). Therefore sin had to be fully and finally judged in the person of His Son. This is why Paul writes: “God presented

him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus” (**Romans 3:25-26**). Jesus died as our substitute.

### **The Resurrection and Forgiveness of Sins**

When the apostles appeared before the Sanhedrin (**Acts 5:27**), the apostles, in response to questions asked by the ruling body, addressed the benefits of the resurrection in these words: “God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel” (**Acts 5:31**). For the believer, the resurrection is the seal of God’s acceptance of the sacrifice Jesus made for sin. Forgiveness of sins is not difficult to receive; it is simply a matter of faith in Jesus. Peter says, “everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (**Acts 10:43**). The act of believing involves repentance and baptism on the part of the one who wishes to possess eternal life.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter, in response to the crowds questioning him and the other apostles about what to do to be saved, responded by asserting, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (**Acts 2:38**). If you wish to experience “forgiveness full and free,” you must repent of your sins. Repentance is more than just regret over your past actions; repentance involves a total change of heart, mind, and will concerning sin. Repentance means that you are no longer a servant of sin, but rather a servant of righteousness. The Scriptures assert, “He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy” (**Proverbs 28:13**). John also proclaims the same thing: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (**1 John 1:9**). Forgiveness is available to anyone who believes in Jesus and repents of his/her sins. Once you have repented of your sins, then you need to respond to baptism that is in the name of Jesus—“repent and be baptized,” announced Peter.

### **Personal Reliance on Christ for Forgiveness**

There is only one Person in the universe who can set you free from sin, and that One is none other than Jesus Christ our Lord. “Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins” (**Acts 10:43**), said Peter to Cornelius and his household. Paul expresses it this way: “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace” (**Ephesians 1:7**). Here it is—forgiveness full and free. Do you want forgiveness in your life? You would do well to listen to Peter as he speaks about the forgiveness of sins to Cornelius: “He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (**Acts 10:42-43**).

Paul, in Pisidian Antioch, calls attention to the “good news” about forgiveness (**Acts 13:32**). He also calls attention to the Holy Scriptures to give validity to his conclusions: “What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm (**Acts 13:32-33**). Again Paul declares, “Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness

of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses” ([Acts 13:38-39](#)). In conclusion, I remind each of you that if you wish to possess “forgiveness full and free,” the condition is: a total repentance of sin and a total reliance on Christ.

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**Message Delivered  
at the Following  
Congregations**

Oakwood Hills Church  
DeFuniak Springs, FL  
Date: June 19, 1999  
Time: 7 p.m.  
Occasion: Gospel Meeting  
Present:

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<sup>[1]</sup> All Scripture citations are from *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984, unless stated otherwise.

<sup>[2]</sup> *The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982